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**SCLA training program ready to fly****By RYAN ORR Staff Writer****Ryan Orr may be reached at 951-6277 or rorr@vvdailypress.com.**

SAN BERNARDINO — The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved \$500,000 Tuesday to help jump-start an aviation training program at Southern California Logistics Airport in Victorville.

The money, which was secured by 1st District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt, will go toward purchasing equipment and making capital improvements at SCLA to establish the program.

A survey of the 17 aviation-related companies at SCLA showed they need 150 to 300 new aviation mechanics annually.

After finishing the two-year program that will be offered through Victor Valley College, the airframe and power plant mechanics will be approved by the Federal Aviation Administration and earning a median average income of \$57,380 annually.

With more experience workers can earn up to \$77,234.

The initial goal is to get 300 workers through the program, said David Zook, spokesman for Mitzelfelt. That would come to \$17.2 million of income for the county.

"This assistance will provide career opportunities for hundreds of High Desert residents every year while giving SCLA companies the new pool of talented technicians they have been searching for," Mitzelfelt said.

If the FAA approves the curriculum, equipment and facilities, VVC hopes to start the program in October.

For more information go to WWW.VVC.EDU and click on aviation maintenance or call the Department of Workforce Development at 949-8526.

CONTACT US

The Sun welcomes letters to the editor. Your letters must include your **name, address and a daytime telephone number**. All letters are subject to editing. Letters of more than **200 words** will not be considered. Writers should limit their submissions to one a month.

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VOICE of the PEOPLE

Investing in youth

Our youth play a critical role in the economic growth and future of San Bernardino County. We need to invest our time and resources in educating and preparing them for the highly skilled jobs offered by our region's growing industries. In order for our youth to thrive, they first need to be prepared.

San Bernardino County faces serious challenges: A recent study conducted by the Southern California Association of Governments reports that the county's high school dropout rate has risen to 20 percent. Our students now leave school at a higher rate than the national average. With idle hands and spare time, youth are more likely to engage in criminal activity.

In order to produce a highly skilled and educated work force, we need to make young people our priority. By providing them with training and a career path in a friendly environment, we can deter them from crime and show them that there is a higher quality of life available to them.

The San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board is a local organization working to address this challenge. The Workforce Investment Board allocates funds to help young people who are the most at risk of getting involved with gangs. These funds help youth further their education or learn the skills needed to enter the work force.

Each year, our young residents graduate or exit high school and join the work force. Many of them don't have the skills or resources to support themselves. The San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board offers the tools and training to help them establish a career path. It provides them with information about career options, focusing on industries that are growing in the county, as well as training them on how to enter these careers and increase their earnings to improve their quality of life.

The most important thing that we can do to ensure a prosperous and safe community is to educate our youth and show them the expanding range of opportunities in San Bernardino County. They need to know that there are services available to help to build the skills to achieve a better quality of life.

As a lifelong educator, I encourage local organizations to collaborate and develop programs that give our youth the tools and resources they need. We need to collaborate with organizations like the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board to increase funding for programs that give young people the opportunity to learn job skills, further their education and lead them away from destructive activities. Education and job skills lead to a good job, a fulfilling career and the opportunity to thrive in our growing county.

GARY C. OVITT

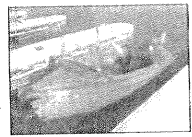
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Growth through service



WIB gives local work force a leg up | Page 6

Personal responsibility

WIB programs aim to impart life skills

By Matt Wrye
Staff Writer

With looks of curiosity, they came trudging through the hot sun to see what all the commotion was about.

People at Seccombe Lake Park in San Bernardino last week had stumbled upon a group of teenage students and young adults handing out personal hygiene packages for anyone who needed them.

But there is more to this story than just a mid-week goodwill mission, an even bigger force stirring in the lives of these volunteers.

Their community service was related to a project funded by the San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board, an organization that's teaching young people about personal responsibility through community service and job training.

In San Bernardino County, young people ages 18 and into their 20s who didn't graduate from high school are discovering a second chance to jump-start their careers through WIB programs.

They allow them to finish their high school or college diplomas, or work towards certificates in the manufacturing, health care, transportation and logistics industries, among others, according to Curt Hagman, chairman of the county's Workforce Investment Board.

"The best way to train a good work force is to go to employers and say, 'Hey, what do you need?'" he said. "So they know that they're getting what they want, and we know we're providing skilled (workers) in the right direction."

Besides his personal mission to become a welder, Ricky Sanchez was focused that day on donating his time to the Provisional Accelerated Learning Center's mission at Seccombe Lake Park, because he feels the organization has given him the chance to start building his future.

"Through this, I can get everything the (U.S.) Coast Guard can offer," said Sanchez, who almost decided to join the military branch.

The PAL Center, which helped pay for Sanchez's welding education, is just one of several organizations and faith-based ministries funded by WIB.

Sanchez ultimately hopes to get a job through the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, a building-industry union.

"In two years, I'll be building a freeway, and in another two years I'll be working

somewhere else," he said proudly.

Sanchez feels lucky, he said, especially since some parents are refinancing their home mortgages just to get their kids through college. He wants to teach others the skill that's helping pave his way to a bright future in a high-demand industry — something he owes all to the PAL Center.

"It's one of the best things anyone my age can ask for," he said.

The 20-year-old is just one of hundreds of students benefitting every year from the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, a law that's steered federal money into Workforce Investment Boards like San Bernardino County's to spur economic development.

Hagman said San Bernardino-area employers are looking for employees who show up on time, act respectfully and dress appropriately, those with "soft skills," which is something WIB hones in

on.

"It's really hard for them to get quality people," Hagman said about employers.

A lesson in both soft skills and life skills is what 22-year-old Destarra Alexander of San Bernardino got when she joined PAL Center seven years ago.

When Alexander got pregnant as a young teenager, her high school diploma was put on hold.

But since then, she's been making up for it. The PAL Center taught her the basics of opening a personal bank account, good customer service for the workplace, and "how to act appropriately in certain places," Alexander said.

"They teach you: Don't be afraid to explore; don't be afraid to converse and ask questions," she said. "Everything that you need to learn about life, you learn through this program."

After graduating from the PAL Center,

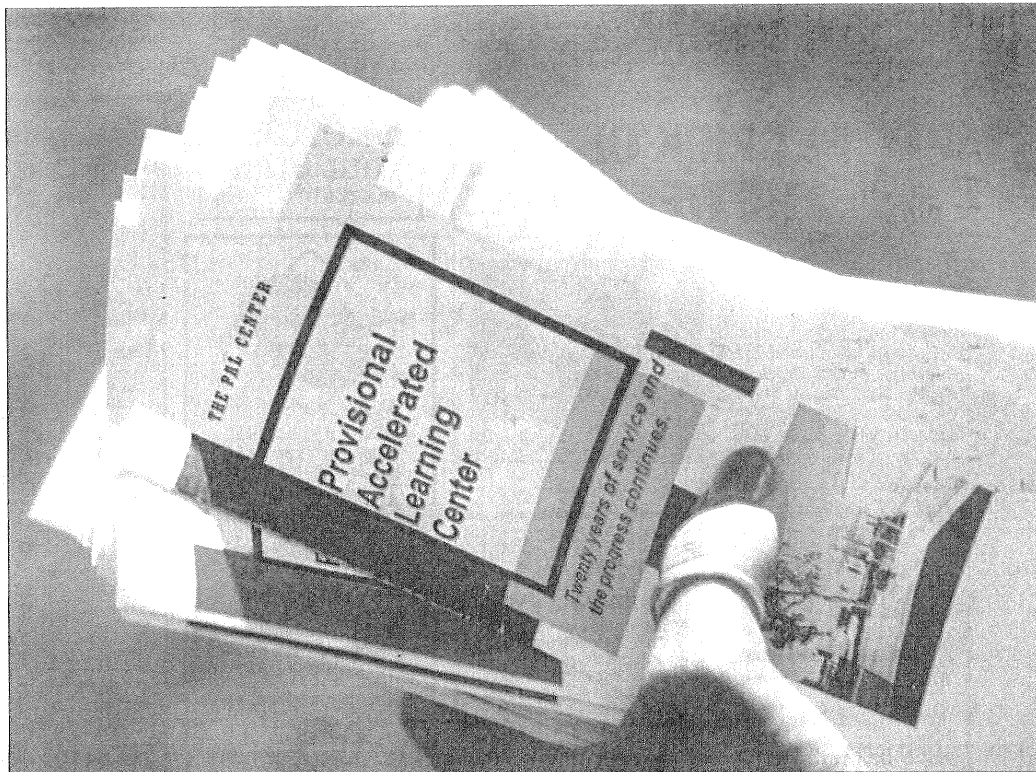
the Alexander is looking forward to learning day-care service skills and eventually opening up her own business. It's a dream she's had since before high school.

With WIB projects reaching hundreds of students and young people in affiliated organizations throughout the county, stories like Alexander's aren't unusual, said Lynnae Pattison, coordinator of the Workforce Investment Act for Colton-Redlands-Yucaipa Regional Occupation Program.

Her main objective is to connect students, ages 17 to 21, with educational and living resources that help them finish their high school diplomas or earn vocational certificates.

"Each student has their own road map," Pattison said. "We continually tell them: 'You can do it.'"

Matt Wrye can be reached at (909) 386-3890 or by e-mail at mattew.wrye@sbsun.com.





Photos by Jennifer Cappuccio/Correspondent

ABOVE: Workforce Investment Act Director Jacqueline White hands out care packages to residents June 26 at Seccombe Lake Park in San Bernardino.

FAR LEFT: A Workforce Investment Act student holds onto pamphlets for the Provisional Accelerated Learning Center to pass out at Seccombe Lake Park in San Bernardino.

LEFT: Materials wait to be handed out by Workforce Investment Act students.

ON THE COVER: A Workforce Investment Act student talks to parkgoers June 26 at Seccombe Lake Park in San Bernardino.



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Money Matters

Victor Valley and Barstow benefit from local nursing school initiatives BY LUKE COWLES

In a recent motion, led by Brad Mitzelfelt, first district supervisor of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors (SBCBS), \$225,000 has been secured for existing and new nursing programs in the Inland Empire. The nursing program at Victor Valley College will receive \$150,000 for program expansion, while the additional \$75,000 has been earmarked as start-up funds for a brand new nursing program at Barstow Community College.

Partners in Collaboration

The San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board (SBCoWIB) is partnering with the SBCBS in this collaborative effort to help solve the nursing shortage in the Inland Empire communities. As the population of San Bernardino County continues to expand rapidly each year, the demand for quality nursing care follows suit. Having community and legislative support to preserve quality healthcare gives Patricia Luther, EdD, RN, director of nursing at Victor Valley College, a sense of security about the future of nursing in the Inland Empire.

"This decision shows that the county board of supervisors has good insight into what's going on in the county," Luther stated. "The population is growing by leaps and bounds and we need to keep up with that. As I understand, the board has made an ongoing commitment to continue helping us expand nursing programs in the future and we look forward to that."

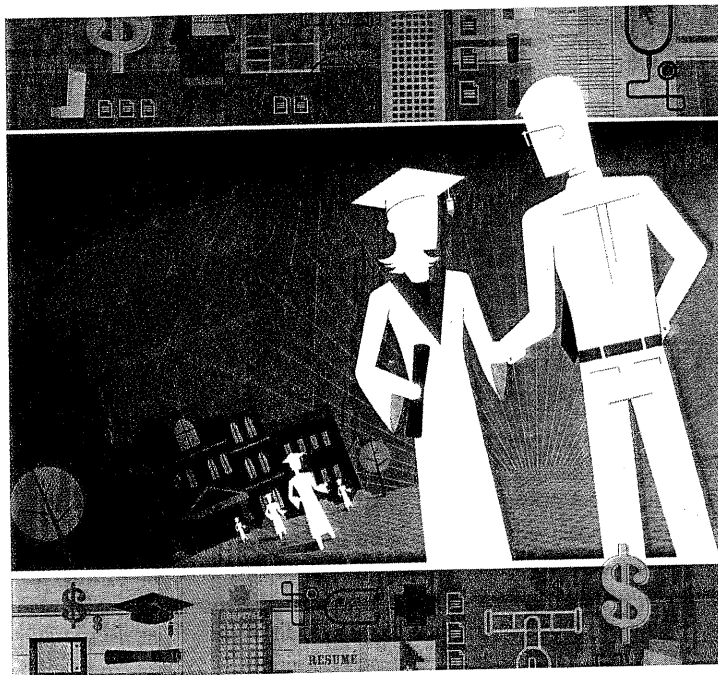
Part of that ongoing commitment includes SBCoWIB's collaboration with California State University, San Bernardino, to enroll 120 new nursing students and recruit 12 adjunct faculty members from Riverside Community Hospital. SBCoWIB is a local body of volunteer, private-sector business owners and public-sector representatives who receive federal funds to allocate to public institutions to help develop the workforce. It's a way to help communities direct asset allocation to where they believe it will help the most.

"The best thing about these funds is that the money is allocated to each county and can be distributed as the residents who actually live there see fit," explained Phil Cothran, past chairman of SBCoWIB. "As local business people, we are able to pinpoint what's best for our communities."

Growing Their Own

As it stands, Victor Valley College will use the newly acquired funding to increase enrollment by 40 students in 2008. According to Luther, the college will now be able to double its number of first-semester students to 76. As the first county grant of its kind for Victor Valley College, Luther sees it as an investment in nurses and the residents of all Inland Empire communities.

"This grant creates many opportunities for those who are interested in nursing. The field keeps expanding and I think the only way to keep pace and meet the needs of the nursing shortage, as well, is to grow our own," Luther explained. The county's support means we're partners in this effort. Growing our own means new grads not only choose to edu-



cate themselves here, but to stay, live and work in the high desert."

Because the nursing program at Barstow Community College will be brand new, its expansion will unfold over the next 2-3 years. During that time, the initial funds the college has received will support development expenses such as a feasibility study, curriculum development, hiring a nursing director and equipment acquisition.

Forging a Future

Securing quality healthcare for the future means maintaining an open dialogue with healthcare professionals about the growing needs of the county. When it comes to designing a plan that can grow into the future, Cothran and the SBCoWIB know the advice of healthcare professionals is invaluable. Going straight to the source helps build a foundation for a plan that will last.

"We're [SBCoWIB] in the process right now of setting up a task force with all the administrators of the hospitals within the region," Cothran said. "We want to know what their needs are. Based on their input, we're making a plan for the future that can adapt to our changing communities. It's the best way to continue to provide the residents of San Bernardino County with the quality of healthcare they're familiar with."

For Luther, the county support signifies a unified vision for supporting nursing education for years to come. An investment in nursing education is an investment in the well-being of the future of San Bernardino County. When everyone is on the same page, the future is full of possibilities.

"Just knowing we can place more quality nurses in the communities of San Bernardino County gives me confidence that we can meet the challenges of the nursing shortage head on," Luther said. "Its constructive partnerships like those with San Bernardino County that foster real and lasting change."

Luke Cowles is senior regional editor at ADVANCE.

SPOTLIGHT: EDUCATIONAL HELPING HAND OFFERED TO COUNTY'S YOUTHS

PROGRAM SEEKS YOUNG PEOPLE

*Earn diploma
or learn
job skills*

BY MELANIE LADONGA
THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

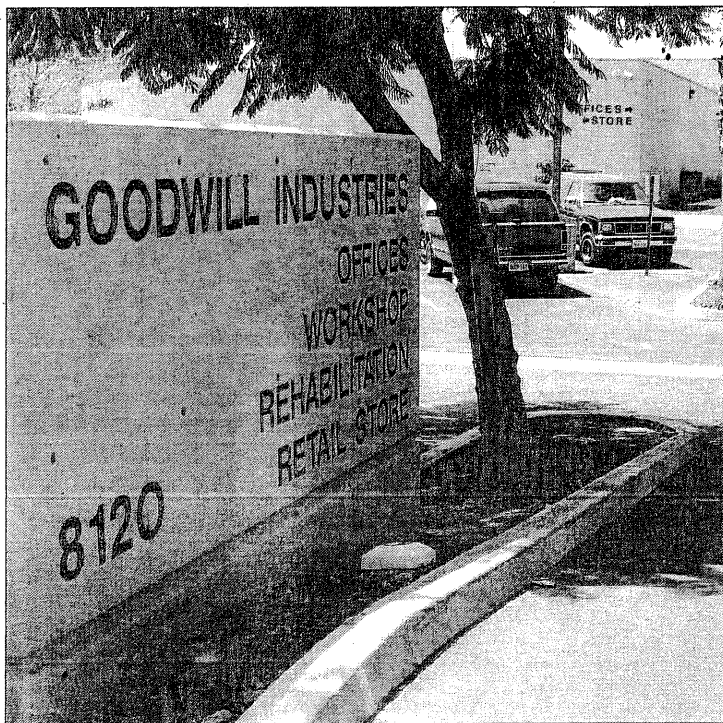
The San Bernardino County Youth Opportunity Program needs nearly 40 more troubled teens and young adults to participate in the free program that helps guide them to various educational programs.

The program, operated by Goodwill Southern California, is in its second year and will serve young people ages 16 to 21.

The program is funded through the County Workforce Investment Act and operates in partnership with the San Bernardino County Probation Department.

Robert Rochelle, a youth career adviser responsible for the participants in San Bernardino County, said they may receive help earning a high school diploma or GED, or vocational assistance to help them find jobs.

"We open their eyes to see



MELANIE LADONGA/THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE

The San Bernardino County Youth Opportunity Program, Goodwill Southern California, is seeking teens and young adults for its free educational programs. Those interested can fill out an application at its San Bernardino office.

that there is a big world. We give them assessments and see what they would like to do," Rochelle said.

Since July 2006, the program has served 56 young people,

introducing them to education and basic entry-level jobs. The program uses short-term education training from certificate programs offered by the Regional Occupational Program and Chaffey Community College.

The program fosters self-sufficiency so that troubled youths can get back into the community.

"The main goal is for them to learn the skills and become employed," Rochelle said. "We're their cheerleaders. Everybody's got to have a cheerleader now and then."

The program has 18 participants this year but needs 37 more in the 19- to 21-year-old range by Sept. 30.

Youths from Colton, Fontana, Highland, Ontario, Redlands, Rancho Cucamonga and Rialto are eligible to apply. City of San Bernardino residents are not eligible.

Those interested can fill out an application at 8120 Palm Lane in San Bernardino. For more information, visit www.goodwillsocal.org or call 909-885-3831.

Reach Melanie Ladonga at 909-806-3081 or mladonga@PE.com